2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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581 The girl's choice of a husband is undoubtedly influenced by the amount of bride-wealth that the young man is able to provide, and her relatives—father, brothers, and the *na*—will try to dissuade her from a poor marriage. Public opinion would, however, be against forcing a girl to take a repugnant partner for the sake of the cattle.
[582] The provision of the bride-wealth prevents very early marriage, and men do not appear to marry under about twenty years of age.

584 After the bride-wealth has been arranged the young people go to the house of the girl's father. The latter brings a goat into the enclosure and the father of the prospective bridegroom cuts an ear from the animal and binds it to the girl's ankle, when all pray to Nyakang and possibly also to Juok. For some time before the marriage the prospective bridegroom begins to provide fish for his future parents-in-law; he will bring fish every day, and only if the catch is large will he keep any for himself. If he gets on well with his parents-in-law he may continue to do this for a long time after marriage, though he is not bound to do so.

585 The wedding feast takes place at the house of the bride's father, after the whole bride-wealth has been handed over. Much beer is prepared and if the father can afford it a bull is killed. Dancing and
[591] feasting may last three days. The couple then go to live in the husband's village, where he has already built a house with the aid of
[476] his friends—presumably his age mates. No marriage was celebrated
[561] during our stay in the Shilluk country, but from our informants we gathered that the time of the actual consummation of marriage was
584 not a matter of great importance, and that this has usually taken place
836 before the marriage feast, which merely marks the fact that the girl leaves her father's house. We concluded that the usual practice was for intercourse to begin, if the girl was old enough, after a fair proportion of the bride-wealth had been given—one informant said seven cows, another six. The man would come to his betrothed's village and send a friend to fetch her away from her father's house, when they would spend the night in some other house in the village. The transfer of the bride-wealth might take two years or more, the first instalment consisting of two cows.

585 Hofmayr describes a ceremony when the concluding ox of the bride-wealth is handed over. The ox is decorated, and the bridegroom and the young people of both sexes from his village accompany it to the bride's village. Here a mock battle takes place and the bride's friends eventually seize the ox. The bridegroom and his companions

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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to the bride-wealth of her brother's son. She may demand the cattle for her brother's son from her own husband, and he will always give them; should he refuse she might threaten to leave him. We were told that a boy who had no *waja*, *nywaja*, or sister, would be poor indeed. The two latter do not actually contribute, but in the lad's position of *una* to his *nywaja* and brother to his sister he gets a portion of the bride-wealth given on their marriage.

We could obtain little reliable information relating to age-classes or similar organizations, and formed the opinion that the institution was of little importance and was probably dying out, and that neither knocking out teeth or scarring the forehead could properly be regarded as a puberty rite.[1] Both girls and boys—except the royal family down to the *kwanyireth*—have the four lower incisors knocked out, but no reason could be discovered. Mr. Heasty informs us that the lower milk incisors are taken out—or the young teeth may be burnt away—in babies so young that the teeth may not have come through the gum. This is done both by *kwareth* and commoners, lest the child should become ill or die. The permanent teeth are removed in the tenth or eleventh year and buried near the parents' house. Girls and boys are treated separately in groups, but we could not discover that the operation gave rise to any social bond. Here we may add that to knock out a man's front teeth (presumably this refers to the upper jaw) is considered a grave offence, and in the old days a fine of ten head of cattle was imposed.

Foreheads are scarred at much the same age or a little later, two or three lines of scars, called *tai*, being made, which in the young stand out like beads across the brow and are regarded as greatly enhancing the appearance. This also is done in groups by some man who is expert at the work. Forehead scarring seems to come nearer to being an initiation ceremony in the common use of the term, and at this period the lads cease to sleep in their parents' hut, they go to the cattle byre and beat the drums and take full part in the dances. It is true that lads do dance before this, but rather in play and more as imitators than participators, whereas after head scarring the dance becomes an important occupation with great social significance, for when a lad dances with the warriors he is considered a man. Though age-classes have not the obvious social importance that they have among Nuer and Dinka, lads scarred at the same time were

[1] Mr. Heasty notes that in the neighbourhood of Dolelb Hill there have been no new age-classes for many years.

2:Seligman & Seligman E-5 (1909-1910) 1932
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grouped together in battle, and still eat together ceremoniously, e.g. at mourning feasts. The *kwanyireth* have their foreheads scarred in the same manner as commoners. Lines of scar marks are also made on the breast, across the shoulder blade, and two rectangular masses above the umbilicus; these are considered to have no tribal significance but are done for the sake of adornment and are said to be admired by the opposite sex.

We are indebted to Mr. Heasty for a note on Shilluk customs, which seem to indicate that the milk avoidances of the Nilotes are dependent on fear of contamination associated with the sexual act.

A young woman does not drink milk under any circumstances, though a woman who is nursing a baby may, as do old women past the reproductive age. Only small boys herd the cattle and milk them, for once a boy has reached maturity there is the danger that he may have had sexual contact, when if he milked, or handled manure, or even walked among the cattle in their pens, he would cause them to become sterile. These beliefs are held so strongly that a child who goes to his neighbours to drink milk must have a bath before he returns home, lest milk might adhere to him, be mixed with food, and be eaten by someone who was unclean. If a man has had sexual relations with his wife or another he is considered unclean and does not drink milk until the sun has set the following day. Mr. Heasty could not discover that anyone objected to drinking milk drawn by himself, nor does anyone avoid taking milk and meat together. The pottery vessels used for milk are not used for any other purpose.

A woman cooks for her husband and leaves the hut while he eats, but it is not shameful for men and women to be seen eating together, and after a man has eaten the main part of a meal a woman and her friends, usually her unmarried *nyiwa* (if her *gol* is not distant), may sit and eat while he continues his meal. A newly married couple do not eat together. Small reed mats called *paro* are used to put over pots of food to keep off flies and dust, and out of respect a woman might stand one of these upright to screen her face while eating or drinking.

of the newly elected *reth* Nyikang and Dak are brought in procession from Akurwa to Fashoda with their priests to test the new *reth*.

The conventional opposition between northern and southern divisions now becomes apparent. The forces of the southern province flock to support the *reth*-elect and wait at Dabalo settlement while Nyikang and his supporters assemble at Adodo. The two armies then march to Khor Arepajur and a mock battle takes place with millet stalks instead of spears. Nyikang captures the *reth*-elect and there is a procession of the shrine of Nyikang at Fashoda. Certain ceremonies of a mystic nature follow, which are not participated in by the whole people, as are the procession and battle. The image of Nyikang is placed on the royal stool, then the king-elect sits on it and the spirit of Nyikang is believed to enter into him, and possess him causing him to tremble.

A few days later a second mock battle occurs between the king's supporters and Nyikang. The *reth* is victorious, for Nyikang has taken possession of him and the effigy is now merely the symbol of Nyikang and no longer the repository of his spirit. . In a final ceremony all the important chiefs and elders from all parts of Shillukland declare their allegiance to the new *reth*.

The installation ceremonies of the *reth* and the traditions relating to Nyikang show how, at every point, the structure and political organisation of the Shilluk people is confirmed by ritual and by mystic symbols.

All rebellions and revolts are directed against the king in person and not against the kingship itself. The unity of the Shilluk is such that the various segments of the country can be represented by the common symbol of the *reth*-ship. Nevertheless, there are powerful tendencies towards fission within the structure. As has been shown, the kingship is the subject of competition on the part of the *nyireth* candidates supported by chiefs and forces available from their territories.

Of all the Nilotic groups for which there is any considerable information, the Shilluk alone form a single political unit, or nation, as opposed to a number of separate tribes or tribal groups which are culturally similar but not politically unified. At the same time, the principles of their political structure and social organisation are similar in many respects to those of the rest of the Nilotes, in particular the Anuak.

AGE SETS

Apart from a brief mention by Hofmayr, the only information concerning the Shilluk age sets is contained in Howell's article in *Sudan Notes and Records*, 1941, Vol.XXIV.

On reaching puberty a Shilluk boy is initiated into the age-set organisation. A Shilluk age set is known as *ric* and is made up of three or more subdivisions each consisting of men of approximately the same age, who have herded cattle together as boys. A man always remains in the subdivision into which he has been initiated, but a periodical shuffling of the subdivisions alters their respective positions in an age set and the whole age-set organisation. A reorganisation of the groups of subdivisions

thus occurs periodically. The subdivisions of any age set are known as 561
'head', 'neck' and 'middle'.

As new subdivisions are continually being formed by initiated youths the immediate age set into which they enter grows too large. In addition the oldest subdivisions of the age set, comprising the married men and fathers, begin to die out or are ready for retirement. A new grouping of all the subdivisions is achieved by the *ngol* or cutting ceremony, when age sets are ceremonially divided into distinct units. The process is shown in the diagram. Surviving members of age set A (the older subdivisions) pass completely out of the age organisation into retirement. Older subdivisions of age set B pass into age set A to replace those retiring, while the most recently formed subdivisions pass for the first time into age set B. Thus, room is made for the formation of new subdivisions and there is a moving of subdivisions through the age sets or the formation of newly constituted age sets.

The retired age sets take no part in fighting or in ceremonies connected with the age-set organisation. The reshuffling occurs at the induction of the very young subdivisions, the members of which are anxious to have further privileges and a higher status. On ceremonial occasions the age sets have special parts of the animals killed, the highest age set eats the back and chest, the lower will eat the hump and legs only. According to Howell the regrouping of subdivisions is often the subject of much dispute, particularly between the two subdivisions which will be separated by the new line of division.

There are few occasions when the age set functions. At funerals the men are organised according to age sets as also at beer feasts when each sits in a special place and sings its own song. 764 504

Age sets emphasize the solidarity of the settlement by organising the generations within it. Each settlement unit has its own age-set organisation and there is no connection between the age sets of different settlements, though they all have similar forms and play similar parts in the settlement units. The age sets have little political importance, save that they constitute a bond of unity within the settlement, and this is clear 182 561 621

182 561 621 from the fact that the *jago*, elders of the *dyil* clan, and other lineage representatives, hold political authority quite apart from the age organisation. The age sets take no part in disputes within the settlement, but when the settlement as a whole goes to war the warriors "... are mobilised into age sets."(1) Howell suggests that formerly the age organisation had special military functions, but whether this was so or not, the age sets seem to fulfil a more peaceful purpose today, and form a useful basis for organising the relations of generations for social purposes.

The Ngol Ceremony

561 624 At the *ngol* ceremony a war leader *(ban)* is elected. The *ban* has no administrative or political functions. His duties consist in organising the mobilisation of the warriors and presiding at communal feasts at which people assemble in age sets. His age mates may assist him in his cultivations. After the *ngol* ceremony each age set is given a new name.

Initiation

561 881 There are no elaborate rites of initiation among the Shilluk. Participation in a dance, the *cong bul* marks the initiation of a youth in the age organisation. The *cong bul* is a social affair which is arranged periodically with the permission of the *jago* of the settlement. It is not a ceremony of initiation in the normal sense but merely a formal recognition by the community that a lad has reached adult status and can take part in a man's obligations and privileges. Previous to the *cong bul* a youth is restricted in that he may not fight with spears, take part in war or in any dance other than one held for children. Before the *cong bul* he is not allowed to wear certain kinds of ornaments.

The *cong bul* is attended by a boy when he is 14-16 years old, or earlier if he has to take over the duties of family head through the death of his father. A youth normally obtains his father's permission and another man is appointed to act as his sponsor. The sponsor ceremonially adorns the youth with ornaments before he enters the dance. At the beginning of the dance the warriors salute the *jago*, advance in formation and fling themselves before him.

[553 556] At the time of the *cong bul* the initiated is usually presented with two spears by his father. Rich men give their sons an ox and they take their ox-names from these animals. An ox so given is kept until it dies and then a new one of the same colour is substituted. After the *cong bul* the initiates visit relatives and travel round the countryside for a few months.

CLANS AND LINEAGES

614 There are about a hundred patrilineal clans in Shillukland. Each clan has a name which is preceded by the word *kwar*, meaning 'descendants of'. All clansmen trace their descent from a common ancestor. They are bound by distinct rules of behaviour, by special observances and are exogamous.(2)

613 614 The Shilluk clans, like all Nilotic clans, are dispersed, each clan

(1) Howell, *S.N.R.* 1941, Vol.XXIV, p.57. (2) *Ibid.*, p.47.

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

that the most definite contrasts may be found. Whether this established and institutionalised monarchy is the result of diffusion from elsewhere, a legacy from ancient Egypt,[1] or the result of spontaneous development from the politico-religious functionaries who exist in embryo form among other Shilluk-speaking[2] and, indeed, other Nilotic peoples, is a controversial subject which I do not propose to discuss here.

Territorially, Shilluk country is divided into two provinces, within which are the northern and southern provinces of Muomo and Tung, eleven divisions, and finally each division into a number of settlements which are referred to as *path*.[3] The settlement is the largest political unit which has a permanent and stable function in Shilluk society today.[4] The members occupy a common and clearly defined territory, have a common grazing and fishing area held collectively, a common name, and a common system of age-set nomenclature.[5] Within each settlement are a number of villages or hamlets, each of which, with its offshoots, is occupied by a distinct kinship group, the local lineage of one of the main Shilluk clans. One of these lineages is usually dominant and, though it does not give its name to the settlement, its leader is generally recognized as holding some authority over the rest of the community. In each settlement there are also usually representative lineages of *kwareth* who sometimes, but not always, have assumed a position of dominance within that settlement, usually by force of numbers. There are also *kweg reth* living in close association with *kwareth* or tending one or more of the numerous royal shrines.[6]

There are frequent movements and migrations, both of individuals and of small domestic groups. The persons who thus take up residence in other parts of the country retain links with kinsmen in their original home and these links continue for a period. The number of generations which pass before they are forgotten is indeterminate and variable, but the factor of territorial association is an important one. Lineages of one clan living in one area are likely to retain these links and remain bound by rules of exogamy however far removed they may be in the kinship structure. Moreover, common residence in one village area or even one settlement may create bonds which are equal in strength to kinship ties and may even carry with it a bar to intermarriage. In such circumstances there is usually the fiction of common descent through the female line. Among the Shilluk there is a bar to marriage with close relatives on the maternal side carried to three or four generations, but common residence sometimes creates a more permanent prohibition.

[1] See Seligman, C. G., *Egypt and Negro Africa*. George Routledge & Sons, 1934, p. 60.

[2] For example, the Anuak nobles; see Evans-Pritchard, *The Political System of the Anuak of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*. Monographs on Social Anthropology. London School of Economics. 1940; and Delberg, J. H., *The Lango*.

[3] *path*. A more elastic and relative term than I had realized when writing an article on this subject in 1937. *path* simply means 'home' or 'homeland' and Shilluk refer to *path nilit*: 'Shillukland'. The word itself has the same relativity as the Nuer word *ring* and the Dinka word *wut*.

[4] There have, of course, been changes of boundaries and processes of fission and fusion characteristic of any segmentary society. The nature of the terrain in Shilluk country, however, precludes any great change. The limitations of high ground, with clear cut watercourses as boundaries, together with associated economic interests, tend to stabilize community.

[5] This is a significant fact and one which throws much light on the true nature of the Shilluk *path*. When we compare other Nilotic tribes we find that age-set nomenclature is common to whole tribes, but does not extend beyond tribal boundaries (Nuer) or, like the Shilluk, is limited to smaller segments of society (Ngork Dinka).

[6] Lineages of the *kwareth* are referred to by the name of the *reth*, *nyireth* (son of a *reth*), or *nyimwereth* (grandson of a *reth*) who founded them. Thus *kwareth* Fadiet, *kwanyereth* Adong, &c. Similarly, *kweg reth* are distinguished as *kweg reth* Fadiet, *kweg nyireth* Adong, &c.

9:Howell E-5 (1937-1950) 1952 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

tion, from which he may have deducted recognized fees for his services in the same way as the Nuer and Dinka functionaries did, or did he appropriate the cattle to himself as head of the State? Was homicide a crime against society of which the *reth* was the central representative, or was it merely a private delict? These questions are relevant and fundamental to the whole problem of the nature of Shilluk law and the position of the monarchy.

As among other Nilotic people, we are faced with the difficulty of finding out how homicide was composed before the advent of the present Government. Among the Shilluk it would really be necessary to have information dating back to a period before the advent of the Turkish régime in 1867. It is doubtful, of course, whether the Turks ever had sufficient control over the Shilluk to have any direct influence on their laws and legal procedures, but since they attempted to administer the country through the agency of the *reth*, at any rate during some periods of their administration, they doubtless influenced him in this particular connexion. Except for vague references to the existence of homicide, to internecine strife, and the warlike character of the Shilluk, I know of no precise mention of this subject in early literature.

Blood-feuds and inter-settlement fighting

Shilluk settlements have certain distinctive characteristics including the restriction of age-set names and the ritual of the age-grade system within the settlement. Although now fast disappearing, and no longer of great significance owing to the repressive policy of the Government, the primary function of the age-grade organization seems to have been military.[1] Hofmayr on this subject says:

> Every man is a soldier and literally always under 'arms'. Every Shilluk who has ceremonially danced, is a warrior as long as he is able to bear arms. They form groups. Every settlement is independent with its own *buny* (principal singer and president). Different settlements combine and sally forth under the leadership of the eldest *buny* against their powerful enemies.[2]

The *buny* or *bung*[3] is, within the settlement, the leader of organized hostilities, which have been frequent between Shilluk settlements. His function in this connexion is brought out again and again in official documents and the attitude of the Administration has throughout been hostile. We read, for example, in the records of the Shilluk Chiefs' Council that 'The *reth* is opposed to them all as a subversive influence, but there are evidently some Chiefs who are afraid of them. Young *buny* who give trouble shall be punished and turned out.'[4] Again, in 1947:

> A *buny*, or war-lord in Shilluk, is a social institution which has been forbidden for six years in Shilluk country, and the bar is well known. . . . The *buny* . . . is essentially a leader of the youth of a section, i.e. the warrior class. It is said that in the old days, when there was little public security and each section had to look after itself, the *buny* was a useful functionary, and in so far as he co-ordinated the warriors of a section this was doubtless so. Now, any 'class consciousness' on the part of the warriors must have an aggressive tendency as it can

[1] Howell, op. cit., p. 57.
[2] Hofmayr, op. cit.
[3] Cf. the Dinka word *buny* or 'expert'—though among the Shilluk the term is restricted to the age-set leader, whose duties are primarily military. See also Howell, op. cit., p. 60.
[4] Records of Shilluk Chiefs' Council meeting 1934 (unpublished).

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Many things are denied to the young man who has not been properly initiated. He cannot take part in the formal dances, though he may join in the moonlight dances of the children. He is debarred from that pursuit so dear to the heart of the small boy, that is, he is not permitted to go to their tribal fights. However, he enjoys immunity from danger in these fights, as women and boys who have not danced are placed in the same class; it is a disgrace to kill them. In the few cases that I have known of small lads being killed, the ones who did the killing insisted that it was a mistake—that either the weapon had miscarried or they had mistaken the lad for someone else. Some timid lads may delay their initiation through fear, but to the majority it is a challenge to claim the full rights of men. The boy who has not danced is not permitted to wear the large necklaces made from the heavy hairs of the giraffe tail. He may wear a band of a few hairs, but the large ones called wĭn are forbidden to him. He is also forbidden to wear the rek, the beads made from the eggshell of the ostrich. He is not permitted to use "ajŏŋo" on his hair. This is a brick-like substance made by taking the cleaning from the floor of the stable in the morning and then dried cow dung is put with it, and the resulting mixture is made into a loaf and burned with cow dung. It has a brick-like appearance when finished. It is then powdered. The young man puts oil on his head. The dust is poured on his head, and he keeps shaking his head to get it to form little balls. Other red preparations for the head may be used by the small boys. The lad who has not danced is not permitted to wear the skins of the various members of the cat tribe that the men wear at fights and dances. Finally, he is not permitted to make a formal call on the young ladies until after he has danced, and he is not granted any political rights in the village council.

The ages at the time of initiation vary. A strong lad is initiated at an earlier age than a weakling. The older men say that boys dance at an earlier age than they did formerly. The average age now is perhaps fifteen years. Some of the older men say it used to be at least twenty years. When all the older males in a family are dead a boy may be initiated younger so that he can inherit the property of his father, and also to give the family representation in the civic life of the village. Initiations may occur at both the spring and autumn dances. Those initiated the same year have a feeling of relationship for others of the same

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

561 class. In the fights the last class to be initiated is placed in the rear, and the other men endeavour to protect them. The older men fear [701] that if these lads, who are still novices, should be wounded they might [704] cry out in their suffering and weaken the hearts of the older fighting men.

881 When a young man feels that he is old enough to dance, he usually goes to his father or guardian and asks permission. If the father gives his consent, the lad gets the ostrich eggshell beads (rek) and the dancing skin (okwar). He may also get the giraffe tail necklace (win). Then when a dance occurs in some near-by village he adorns himself with all the ornaments that he can get. The skin and the beads must be tied on him with ceremony the first time. The lad selects a man who is popular with the ladies in the mixed dances, and asks him to tie them on him. The man who performs the ceremony takes a string of the ostrich beads and places them about the waist of the lad, as though he expected to tie the rek in place. He then lets it drop almost to the ground, and then brings it again to the waist of the lad. Three times he acts as though he would tie it, and then lets it down again. Then the fourth time he actually ties the string. The skin is tied in the same way. After the skin and beads have been tied once, the young man may tie them for himself on later occasions.

593 881 Sometimes the parental permission is not given for the son to dance. The father feels that he is too young to dance. He says, "You are too small and weak, and in a battle you would be killed." Sometimes the son heeds the advice of his father, and waits until he is older and is able to dance with the consent of his father. Other young fellows are more determined, and such a one goes to some man to get him to tie his skin and beads. He usually goes to a man of some other village, because the men of his own village would not care to offend his father. The man usually asks the young man if his father consents, and the son says that he does not. He goes from one to another till he finds a man who will act for him. The ceremony is binding in spite of the father's objections, and the young man cannot be released from his responsibilities. When a boy has danced in defiance to the wishes of his father he does not feel so brave after the period of dancing is over, and he asks someone to go with him to "soften his father." The intercessor kneels before the father with the boy behind him, and he says, "The boy went to a dance. You refused,

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

but he grasped it. He asked me to come and see if you are displeased. I have brought him, I give him to you. He is not the only one who has done such a thing, for even of old our boys have so done." If the father says, "I refused because he was small, but I am not angry," the affair is settled, and the boy returns to his home. If the father is angry, and refuses to be reconciled the boy goes home with his friend. The friend then undertakes to make a reconciliation. He gives the father a present, which is usually a sheep or a spear. If the present is refused he will send other and greater presents until the father accepts, and the acceptance implies that the son has been forgiven.

Young men who are initiated to the dance the same year usually have a kindred feeling for each other. When the village goes forth to battle, the ones initiated last and the old men are supposed to be in the rear, so that they will be protected by the stronger fighting men. In a fight, men who have been initiated the same year usually keep together, though that is not always the case. When a feud begins between two villages there are men in each faction who were initiated the same year. While the men go forth by villages, yet their fights are broken up into a number of personal combats. Many men refuse to contend against men who were initiated in their class, and when they find themselves near such men, they move on to seek different foes. On the other hand, others seek to engage men of their own class. Perhaps they follow the analogy of a family, for the most bitter fighting occurs when a family is divided.

After the young man is prepared for the dance he joins the young men of his village who are going to the dance, though he must keep in the rear. In the dances the men go through a regular form, which is largely military in nature. The novice takes part in all of these movements though he must keep to the rear. Then the mixed dances begin, and then comes the real test for the young man. In the mixed dances the woman asks the man to be her partner. Happy indeed is the young man who is asked by some woman at his first dance. He says of the first woman who asks him to dance, "She cut my cloth (kǭk lanā)." In that he refers to the skin he wears. The woman who asks him to dance cannot be a relative, nor may she be a married woman, though a girl who is engaged may ask him to dance. It is preferred that the girl asking him to dance should belong to a different sub-tribe (kwā).

15: Oyler M-5 (ca. 1918) 1926 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

After a boy has danced for a year or two, he may dance with a married woman who has no children. After another lapse of time he is eligible to dance with the mother of one child, and so on until he is eligible to dance with any woman. A man never dances with his own wife. Often the girl who first dances with a boy is in love with him, and sometimes they later get married. Such marriages are usually happy. If a young man is not asked by a girl to dance with her within two or three years of his initiation, it is not likely that any girl will ask him to dance with her, as the other girls would ridicule her for dancing with an unpopular man. Such a man usually experiences difficulty in getting a wife, as no woman wants to marry a man who is unpopular with the women. The mother of the young man who has been asked to dance prepares a feast for the girl who asked him to dance, and sometimes the girl prepares a return feast for the young man and some of his friends. Many an old man speaks with great respect of the girl who first asked him to dance. When a man is dancing with a woman he calls her (cīgā) " my wife."

If a boy makes unseemly haste to call on the young ladies after his initiation, his father is angry, and says, " Is your reason for dancing to get the right to call on the women ? "

After a boy has danced he takes a second name. He may choose his own name, often from something he has done, or from a cow he has bought. If he cannot think of a suitable name he may ask his friends for suggestions. In some cases an older man may go to him and say, " Do you have a name ? " If he replies in the negative, the man may make a suggestion. The boy does not announce his name to his parents. They may hear his young friends call him by his new name, and they ask, " Is that his name now ? "

If a man dies leaving only a small son who has not danced, they say, " His property is on the ground (jumē ya piñ). Later when the boy has danced, they say his property has been inherited (alukē).

People who are of the same age are called (tiiñ ayaj). They are expected to help each other.

The girls may dance when they are very small, but they must wear a sheep-skin. Later, when the girl is larger, and her breasts begin to develop (tiñē atwj) she wears a calf-skin, which is supplied her by her father. If she has no father or close male relative to get her a calf-skin, she will wear the sheep-skin until she is married, and then her husband

17: Pumphrey G-5 (1934-1938) 1941
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177 643 648 The *Reth* to-day is a convenient potentate the basis of whose power becomes more and more of an anachronism. In addition to being President of the "Central Shilluk Court," and as such hearing appeals from the twelve Division Courts, he is the mouthpiece of the Government in an ever increasing number of administrative functions and is invaluable in making peace in blood feuds and in dealing with all serious breaches of the peace. The tribe pays him elaborate outward respect, and continues to feel a genuine reverence for his office.

THE DIVISION CHIEFS.

177 634 It has already been explained that nine of the thirteen division chiefs are in a sense upstarts, being settlement chiefs exalted to an eminence which tradition does not justify, but that they are becoming progressively all to be regarded as having equal authority. They are appointed by the *Reth*, usually on the nomination of a council of the Settlement Chiefs concerned. The prospect of a monthly salary of £E. 2 and the anxiety of each settlement to provide the Division Chief makes the appointment a matter of considerable interest and rivalry. [648] [613] The Government's policy is generally to allow the chieftainship to remain with the lineage of the previous holder unless he was dismissed for misconduct and it is wished to penalise him and his line, or unless there are no suitable candidates from the holder's lineage, or unless his lineage has become so weak as to render impotent any chief appointed therefrom. On such occasions the chieftainship may change from settlement to settlement, as occurred recently in Fashoda Division. [613] [561] There is an unfortunate feeling implanted in the Shilluk that so long as a senior member of the family is alive it is improper that a junior member be appointed. A potentially able young chief will thus be rejected on the grounds of the existence of a doddering uncle. Never- [648] theless the Shilluk are basically aware of the desirability of a strong chief and a veto by the Government, expressed beforehand, upon any candidate who is too old will probably be excepted as a wise dispensation from above, relieving them of the odium of passing over an elder member of the family.

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THE AGE-SET SYSTEM.

561 The age-grade[5] organization is a system of compulsory associations based on classifications of age and sex. In structure it is usually tribal, in outlook and political function essentially democratic. Among the [621] Shilluk, however, age-sets are recruited within the local group or settlement and have no connection beyond similarity of form and function, with age-sets recruited in other settlements. As will be seen, the role which the organization plays in tribal and settlement life is very limited, and is confined to specific military purposes.

It has been stated by some authorities that the age-set system is entirely lacking among the Shilluk or that it has broken down beyond recognition.[6] This would not be surprising, for the organisation of a 182 group into parallel associations based on age and sex, for political 561 purposes at any rate, is almost incompatible with an autocratic political 693 system. It must be remembered that although the concept of monarchy [170] among the Shilluk has not reached the same level as in the Lakustrine Bantu kingdoms or certain other Bantu tribes, it is more developed 182 than among most kindred Nilotics. The age-set system necessarily cuts 561 across the bonds of consanguinity, and, without severe modifications of 614

5. See distinction between "age-set" and "age-grade" as followed by Prof. Radcliffe-Brown and quoted by E. E. Evans-Pritchard in *The Nuer: Age-sets*—Sudan Notes and Records Vol. xix pp. 233-234. Doctor Evans-Pritchard also refers to "Age-set" system rather than "Age-grade" system and since this is a more accurate description his terminology is followed below.

6. Hofmayer (Wilhelm Hofmayer *"Die Shilluk. Geschichte, Religion und Leben Ein Nilolen-stammes."* 1925) does not mention age-grades specifically, but with reference to initiation and warfare he mentions the existence of such an organization.

> "Every man is a soldier and literally always under arms. Every Shilluk who has ceremonially danced is a warrior as long as he is able to bear arms. They form groups. Every settlement is independent with its own *Bany* (principle singer and president). Different settlements combine and sally forth under the leadership of the eldest *Bany* against their powerful enemies. The *Bany* has only advisory powers and is chosen by the chiefs of the district. Unmarried youths form what corresponds to our permanent army, which is divided according to age and has many names."

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social and political function, cannot exist in a society where authority is held by virtue of blood. Further it is likely to raise ties and mutual obligations which conflict with those patterns of behaviour which unite the members of a clan. Usually, when the age-set system is highly developed, the clan system is weakened. The reverse may also be true, and since the kinship groups within the Shilluk settlement retain their distinction, the age-set system is of no great social significance. This is particularly so with regard to political matters. The *Jago*[7] and the elders of the *Dyil* clan and a limited number of representatives from the less powerful lineages hold political authority in the settlement, and over them is the theoretical omnipotence of the *Reth*.

The group solidarity of the settlement springs from the power and prerogative of the *Dyil* clan and from common interests and territorial proximity. The compulsory association and stratification of all male members of the settlement emphasises that feeling of solidarity, but does not conflict with the political function of the *Dyil* clan, for its purpose is limited to warfare. In inter-lineage disputes within the boundaries of the settlement the organization does not function, but in warfare on a wider scale when the separate lineages must fight as one, the young men and warriors are mobilized into age-sets.

Every male inhabitant of a settlement, on reaching the age of puberty, is automatically grouped with his coaevals and together they are recruited to the most recently formed age-set. Each age-set, known in Shilluk as *Ric*, is made up of a series of sub-divisions which are grouped together temporarily until a new reorganization is made. There are two grades through which the members of an age-set will pass before retiring from active military service. Recruitment is compulsory and never individual.

The general structure of the organization is best explained diagrammatically.

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7. Chief.

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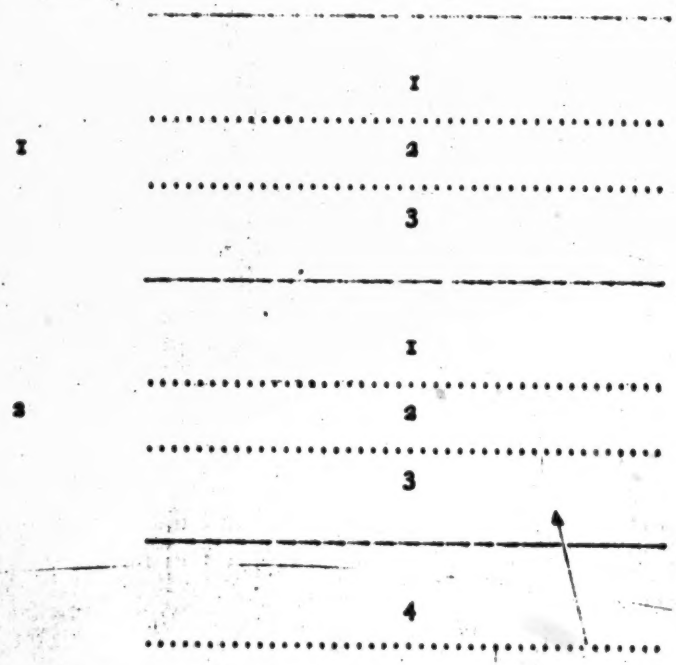
561 The figure below shows the two age-sets occupying the two active military grades through which each must pass in turn.



Each age-set has three or more subdivisions — 1, 2, 3 etc., which are made up of those who are approximately of the same age and who have herded cattle together as boys. The members of age-set A are married men and probably the fathers of families. The age-set is static and new sub-divisions do not reach that grade until a new and formal division between the two age-sets is made. Age-set B, however, is continually increasing in number as new sub-divisions are formed. The number of individuals in each sub-division will vary and the rapidity with which new sub-divisions are formed is not constant. After an indefinite period age-set B will be too large for practical purposes and very much larger than A. Moreover, the older sub-divisions of A will

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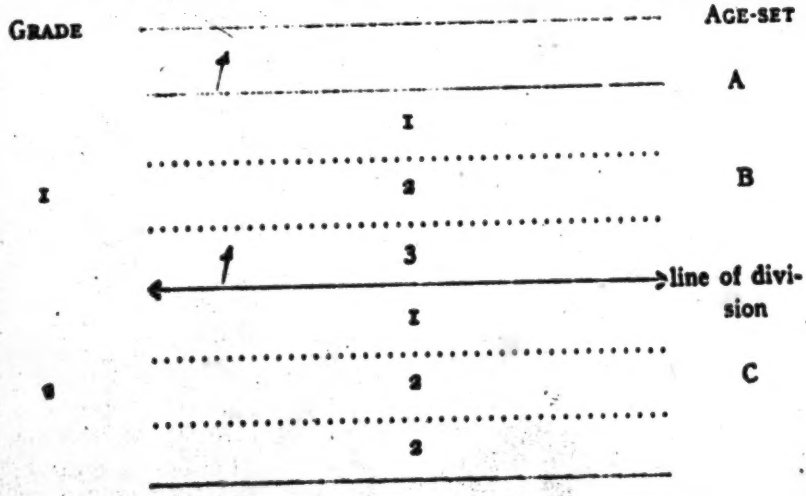
be getting too old for active military service. Many may already be dead. The organisation has thus reached an unbalanced and unwieldy stage and a new division must be made.

It is not clear on whom the decision rests but it is usually the warriors of the younger age-set who initiate the suggestion that a reshuffling takes place. They are anxious to take over the duties and prerogatives of their elders. Some informants state that any man of outstanding personality of the lower age-set could suggest himself as a new war-leader or '*Bañ*' and on his initiative, as representative of the younger age-set which is anxious for promotion, a division would be made.

The *Ngol* or "Cutting" ceremony then takes place and the sub-divisions are reorganized into two age-sets, while the members of age-set A pass out into retirement. Age-set B is in fact divided into two, so that they are approximately equal in numbers.



In this figure the division has been made between sub-divisions 3 and 4 of age-set B. Sub-divisions remain undivided internally and the individual Shilluk remains a member of the sub-division he originally

joined, whatever the new formation may be. The regrouping of sub-divisions is often the subject of heated controversy, particularly between the two sub-divisions who will be separated by the new line of distinction. It is apparently preferable to remain the highest sub-division of the newly formed lower age-set and thereby acquire special privileges and duties. At the last *Ngol* ceremony held in the settlement of *Yom Dok Alal*, the two sub-divisions between whom the distinction was to be made actually came to blows. The age-set A, having retired, participates no longer in warfare nor in the ceremonies associated with the organization.

The sub-divisions of any age-set are known in Shilluk as "head," "neck" and "middle" respectively. Thus while the "head," "neck" and "middle" sub-divisions of B occupy the same position in a new status, the two or three sub-divisions below them are "head," "neck" and "middle" of C. On ceremonial occasions when the age-sets function as such, the highest age-set is privileged to eat the back and chest of any animal provided, while the lower will eat of the hump and legs only. This division of meat is rigidly observed and any infringment is severely punished. This rule is particularly enforced at the *Ngol* when a bull is slaughtered and ceremonially divided and eaten—to emphasise the newly acquired privileges of the age-set in the higher status.

After this the newly appointed *Bañ* who will be war-leader of the senior age-set, is formally elected and is carried jubilantly round the settlement on the shoulders of his age-mates. Frequently this procession enters the territory of another settlement, the boasts of the younger warriors bring out the young men of the neighbouring district, and fighting occurs.

The *Bañ* has no administrative or political functions and has no connection with the *Jago* of the settlement. It is his duty to organize mobilization and to preside at communal feasts at which the age-sets assemble. According to some informants he is assisted in the cultivation of his fields by his age-mates.

After the ceremony is over, each age-set is given a new name, usually taken from some current event or from the colour of the bull

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slaughtered at the *Ngol*. This name is shouted when entering battle, though there are other war-cries associated with each age-set.

Among the Shilluk there are no elaborate and prolonged *rites de passage* through which the youths acquire manhood status and there are no separate ceremonies associated with their recruitment to an age-set. The final act of initiation is participation in a *Cong Bul*, or dance, and the preparations required to do so. The *Cong Bul* is purely a social dance which is arranged from time to time by permission of the *Jago* of the settlement and has no basic religious significance associated with change of status or with age-sets. It is not in itself a ceremony of initiation. To the young boy, then, to dance for the first time is merely a qualificatory rite by which he is recognised in his adult status—a symbol of reintegration to the community after a short period of segregation. Previous to his first dance, he is subject to certain restrictions. He may not fight with spears, nor take part in large-scale warfare or extra-tribal raids. He may not take part in any dances save in the moonlight festivities held by young people only. Further he is not allowed to wear certain kinds of clothing and ornaments, notably large necklaces of giraffe-hair, ostrich-egg beads, and cat skins and he may not adorn his hair with mud. A breach of conduct would be met with bitter ridicule, particularly by the girls, and no youth would dare to disregard the warning of his elders. All these restrictions and many more are removed at the time of the first *Cong Bul* attended by the initiate and indeed are noticably broken at the ceremony itself. The initiates wear the forbidden ornaments and carry spears.

Normally three or four boys from the same settlement are initiated together, but several of such batches may undergo the transitional rites in one year. Participation in his first *Cong* usually occurs when the boy is from fourteen to sixteen, but a youth may undergo the rites at an earlier age, if his father is dead and it is necessary to accelerate his change of status so that he can represent his family—especially if he has no elder brothers. When a youth has obtained his father's permission to undergo initiation, he acquires the necessary ostrich-egg beads and cat-skin and takes these to a man who is appointed his sponsor. The qualification for such a tutorial position is apparently popularity

535 881 leave the dancing ground. Within a few minutes the village is clear of all guests, those who are unable to stand being swept along in the rush.

881 431 Before dancing for the first time the initiate is usually presented with two spears by his father. The sons of rich men are presented with a bull (*Wath Owono*) as well.[8] This bull is treated with great care [553] and affection by the young warrior and he is given a new name by his age-mates—taken from the colour of the bull and they alone may call him so. Theoretically the bull is kept throughout his life, a new [583] one of similar colour and markings being substituted when it dies. It is never given as bride-wealth. The initiates then visit their relatives 881 in the settlement and after a short period of travel return home. In 574 the past these visits were probably on a wider scale and according to Hofmayer "after the dance it is the custom for the Shilluk initiates [114 171] to lead a nomadic life for a time, traversing the country from one end to the other." This statement is probably an exaggeration, but a period of wandering visits is common among African peoples before final reintegration into the community in adult status.

535 764 881 561 At the *Cong Bul*, initiates are introduced to their new privileges together, but the rest of the warriors are not drawn up in age-sets. At the "*Kwogo*" and "*Yok*," which are funeral ceremonies, the male Shilluk are organized according to their respective age-sets. There are few other occasions when the age-set system functions at all.

476 561 Among the Shilluk the more arduous processes of cultivation are carried out communally. A man will invite his neighbours and relatives to help him in his fields and will provide merissa for them afterwards. The helpers are not necessarily his age-mates and it does not appear

[178] 8. The Shilluk say that the custom is dying out and that few fathers have bulls to spare. In any case the youth will take the name of one of his father's bulls. The *Wath Owono* is a source of great pride to its owner and songs are composed about it which are sung for the benefit of girls.

An approximate translation of the song of Ajak, an inhabitant of the Zeraf mouth is as follows:

"I have a grey bull, a great bull,
I am going to Golbaign to buy a bell,
A bell for the bull that lives in
My fathers byre."

476
to be their duty to aid him. The arrangement is merely reciprocal. 561
At the beer feast afterwards, however, the guests are arranged according 476
to their respective sub-divisions. The two senior sub-divisions present 561
enter the hut of their host before the others and it is their privilege 574
to taste the beer first and approve it. They remain in the hut for sometime for they have had an exhausting day in the fields and are thirsty. Outside the hut in the courtyard are grouped the lower sub-divisions, eagerly awaiting their share which is passed out to them when those inside are satisfied with the quality of the beer. Possibly another sub-division is then allowed to enter the hut if there is room at the back.

The sub-divisions are grouped inside the hut in ascending order of seniority and the leader of the senior sub-division present, (*Pagy*) [264] sits near the door. The *Pagy* has a special gourd which is kept full of beer by the man next him. Etiquette is rigidly observed and every-[562] one is careful to sit in the right place and take his turn at the beer. [533] No women are present except the host's wife or wives who sit at the back and serve the beer. Every age-set has its own song and this is sung by those inside the hut while the young men outside take up the chorus.

The existence within the settlement of organized age-sets limited 561 by territorial boundaries is a factor which should ensure co-ordination 571 and peace between the different lineages. The Shilluk say that age-578 mates will not fight each other. In fact this is an exaggeration for the sense of loyalty and mutual obligation between age-mates is not constant or strong. The reason for this is the rarity of occasions in which the age-set organization functions to-day and the very limited purpose to which it is put. In reality, mutual ties and observances practiced by age-mates are quite outside the deeper and more permanent ties of kinship and the Shilluk is not bothered by perpetually conflicting emotions. The age-sets do not operate as such until all lineages are bound together by a common cause apart from and in a different context to internal bickerings which are not infrequent.

Political authority is not now derived from the age-set system, 554 613 but from the powerful position in the settlement of the dominant lineage. 621

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Leadership in war however, is, dependent upon the collective vote of the age-sets, and this perhaps provides a clue to the origin and former purpose of the settlement; namely the necessity of alliance under the threat of war. The local kinship group, split off from the main branch of the clan is not a sufficiently powerful body to defend itself against attack. So lineages, resident in the same part of the country, join together and possibly link themselves to some numerically superior group. Mutual protection is thus made possible. The strongest lineage of the group later assumes political authority and a chief is chosen from its members, but for the purpose which the alliance was originally made, the warriors range themselves in ranks where kinship counts for nothing. A war-leader is elected and not necessarily from the dominant lineage. This is not, of course, the origin of the age-set system, but it may account for the form it has taken among the Shilluk.[9] Latterly, when large-scale warfare is comparatively rare, the original purpose of the alliance is disappearing and with it the motive for the age-set system. A period of proximity, common political and economic interests, however, have caused the separate lineages to regard themselves united by social ties and patterns of behaviour more lasting than those raised by a temporary alliance. The settlement thus becomes an integral unit of the social body.

9. The larger territorial divisions of the tribe, the *Luak*, which are described in Mr. Pumphrey's article, originated in the same way as the settlements. The inhabitants of each division made a temporary pact when a common cause arose. It is therefore likely that age-sets in the past covered a larger section of the population than they do to-day when each age-set is confined to the inhabitants of one settlement. The Shilluk are reticent when questioned on the subject and further investigation is necessary before a full account of the age-set system among the Shilluk can be recorded.